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GOOSE GRASS RHYMES

Books by

MONICA SHANNON

California Fairy Tales

Eyes for the Dark

Goose Grass Rhymes

GOOSE GRASS RHYMES

BY

MONICA SHANNON

6254

Illustrated by

NEVA KANAGA BROWN

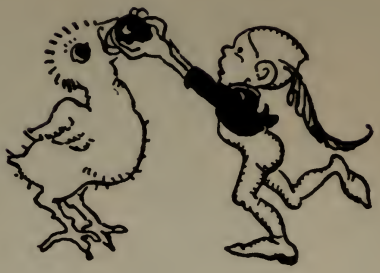
Junior Books

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

Garden City 1930 New York

j811

PRINTED AT THE *Country Life Press*, GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.



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FIRST EDITION

A PRESENT
FOR THOSE TWO GNOMES,
Lucy and Durward

45458
CO. SCHOOLS

CONTENTS

Secrets About Bears and Others

	PAGE
Gallop, Gallop to a Rhyme	3
The Tree Toad	5
Something True About Bears	7
No Elephant Apologizes	8
Maggie Mare	9
The Privateer	10
Bears Would Frown	12
The Country Peddler	14
Oh, I Would Be a Turtle, If—	15
Only My Opinion	16
The Pack Rat's House	17
Sly Mr. Woodpecker and Wise Mr. Owl	19
The Picture-Book Sky	20
Why Owls Stuff Their Ears	21
The Banished Buttercup	22
Biddy Hen	23
Bats Have Dippers	24
Mrs. Robin's Lullaby	25
A Secret About a Frog	27

PAGE

Tell Me, Gypsy Tree 28
The Pack Rat 29
On Moon Nights 31
Princes Pine 32
Thirsty Old Man Sun 33
Too Personal 34
The Dog Follows His Nose 35
The Moon Silver-Polish Song 36
The Sierra Nevada Red Snow 37
Old Man Wind 38
Beetles 39
The Old, Old Dog 40
Secure 41
Grass and Crumbs 42
The Goose Grass Legend 43

Rhymes for Wiggle-My-Thumbs

Three Old Cattlemen 47
Shandydan 48
Our Fish-Hatchery Man 49
A Tailor, A Tailor 50
I Lost a Pretty Penny 51
Further Explorers 52
Miss B. (Instead of Poor Myrtle) 54
There Once Was 56
Arguing with a Cat 57

PAGE

The Four-Leaf Clover 58
The Ideal Age for a Man 59
Up in a Tree with a Tom Cat 60

Four Royal Families

Four Royal Families 62

The Home Life of Mother Goose

The Home Life of Mother Goose 66
When Mother Goose Learned the Worst About Humpty Dumpty 67
Old King Cole Worried Her, Too 68
Other Troubles 68
Little Miss Muffet 69
Jack and Jill Forgot to Say, "Thank You" 69
Jack Was Nimble 70

Rhymes from a Mountain Ranch

Entertaining Grandees and Other Worthies 72
Raking Walnuts in the Rain 74
Our Hired Man 75
When Lights Go Out 77
Cats and Kettles 78
Cow Time 80
The Salt Man 82
When Cows Get Out 84
The Responsible Cow 85
Under Ranch Trees 87
The Cow's Excuse 88

PAGE
Rabbits Are Like Robber Men 89
It's Going to Rain 91
Grown-Up Birds 92
Country Trucks 93
The Proper Way to Meet Mules 94
The Night Song 95
Peek into the Pantry 96
Garden Guests 97
Talking About Goldfish for Presents 98
Tom, Tom, the Rancher's Son 99
California Coffee Bushes 100
Ranch Robbers 101
Singing Beggars 103
The Apple-Seed Party 104
Old Goodie Danced Herself 106
Shopping for Tail Feathers 108
June (The Sierra Dry Season Begins) 109
Harvest Tramps 110
To St. Francis of Assisi 112
Cider Time 114
Night Prayers 115
Moths 116

The Fairies Are Back

The Fairies Are Back 121
Sir William Wrinkle Nose 122
Puck and the Airman 124

PAGE
The Fatter Fairies 125
Begging the Answer 127
How to Tell Goblins from Elves 128
Could It Have Been a Shadow? 130
The Mice Herder 131
The Enchanted Pullman Porter 132
Everything Is a Fairy Tale 134
The Queen's Stockings 135
While Hoeing 136
Coaxing a Fairy Fiddler 137

Not for Perfect Children

The Perfect Child 140
Things Said to One's Self 142
Aristocrats 143
Mrs. J. B. Conning Purr 144
For Bored Bobby 145
Uncle Frank 146
Deaf to Applause 147
Ancestors 148
When Kings Are Punching Cattle 149
When Bees Stay Home 150
Don't Hurt Your Own Feelings 152
I Know the Rabbit 153
Riding to Lady Bug Mesa 154
Sleep, Little Boy 155

SECRETS ABOUT BEARS AND OTHERS

GALLOP, GALLOP TO A RHYME

"All I do is dole out minutes
To the eggs that should be linnets"—
That's the song of Mister Time,
Gallop, gallop to a rhyme.
Wind the clock and hear it chime!

"All I do is dole out hours
To the seeds that would be flowers,
Or to clouds that should be showers"—
That's the song of Mister Time,
Gallop, gallop to a rhyme.

"All I do is dole out seasons,
Gallop for I have my reasons!"—
That's the song of Mister Time,
Gallop, gallop to a rhyme.
Wind the clock and hear it chime!

THE TREE TOAD

The Tree Toad is a creature neat,
With tidy rubbers on his feet.
Embarrassment is all he knows—
His color comes, his color goes.

He squats upon the milk-house shelf
In summertime, and helps himself
To darting flies and nervous gnats—
Pooh-poohing milk, a food for cats.

His pantry in the wintertime
Is often in a leafy lime,
And down he shouts, in strident tones
(He uses leaves for megaphones),

"Get up, get up, get up, get up,
And on these spicy raindrops sup."
He squats in rain up to his knees—
And yet I never heard him sneeze!

The Tree Toad is quite small, at least,
Unless his girth has just increased.
The truth is always hard to seek,
For things are changing every week.

SOMETHING TRUE ABOUT BEARS

Very tidy are the bears.
Not prim, but tidiness is theirs.
When they yawn up from their bed,
You see the bears, with cubs ahead,
On their way to redwood stumps,
With bearish jumps.
The cubby holes where cubbies go
To bathe are full of melted snow.
In his red and fragrant tub,
You never hear a crying cub.
The water's cold? Bah! who cares!
Not tidy bears!

NO ELEPHANT APOLOGIZES

The Elephant's a gawkward beast.
He offers no excuse, at least
He never says, "I know I'm queer.
A cabbage leaf is like my ear.
And while I love a Grecian nose,
Mine dangles like a garden hose.
My skin is thick and much too loose.
My eyes are small—oh, what's the use?"

No elephant says things like these,
Nor makes polite apologies.
But, casually, he wanders far
Under his own peculiar star.

MAGGIE MARE

It's queer to see our Maggie Mare,
  Her hair done up in burrs.
I always hate to stand and stare
For Maggie is so unaware
  There is no mane like hers.

Poor Maggie Mare! No one should smile
  (Not that she would complain)—
But you will travel many a mile
Before you find a quainter style
  In doing up a mane.

THE PRIVATEER

It hasn't rained for Oh, so long,
The birds are listening for the song
Of rain:
Wet this, wet that,
Pitter, pitter, pitter, pat.

The sage is powder in your hand,
The sky is bleached as white as sand.
Come, Rain,
Wet this, wet that,
Pitter, pitter, pitter, pat.

The Frog is nautical and proud,
He watches for a Clipper Cloud,
With rain,
For this, for that,
Pitter, pitter, pitter, pat.

"A Pirate Cloud, with blowing sails!
Her cargo, brimming water pails,
That's plain,"
Croaks Frog, the Fat,
Pitter, pitter, pitter, pat.

"That ship is wrecked on Moon's old shore,
Her leaks were big, her leaks were four,"
Again
Croaks Frog, the Fat,
Pitter, pitter, pitter pat.

Her flag with crossbones tattered soon,
And yet her glories on the Moon
Remain;
On those sand dunes,
The crash, the glitter of doubloons!

BEARS WOULD FROWN

If it were always summer,
The bears would get no sleep.
And crickets would grow cumbersome,
Too fat to dance or leap.
Red Robin would be settling down
To give up gypsy flights,
While fairies would grow thin as threads
From winding through the nights.

If it were never winter,
  No wind would run away,
When stars were moving gingerly,
  And toss his mane and neigh
To see them spinning in a rut,
  While snow was venturing down.
If it were always summer,
  The nicest bears would frown.

Knockety, knockety, knock!
No one will answer the door.
He seems to be picking the lock,
The brave little bore.
Knockety, knockety, knock!
What in the world, shall I do?
He's up on the roof with his stock—
An acorn falls through.

Rappety, rappety, rap!
"No, no. Well, not one to-day."
He drops one down in my lap.
"It's beautiful, aye?"
Rappety, rappety, rap!
"Acorns to set on your sill."
Such a persistent chap—
I glance at his bill.

Knockety, knockety, knock!
His eyes as bright as his cap—
One of the woodpecker flock,
Who constantly rap.

OH, I WOULD BE A TURTLE, IF——

Who wouldn't be a turtle?
  And wear a coat-of-mail
Which covers every inch of him,
  Except his head and tail.
He only has to pull these in
  To sit and grin.

Who wouldn't be a turtle?
  And swim as well as he,
Or live as rakishly on land,
  When weary of the sea.
No turtle fears he'll be a feast
  For bird or beast.

Who wouldn't be a turtle?
  And never take the croup.
Well, I would be a turtle if—
  It weren't for turtle soup!

ONLY MY OPINION

Is a caterpillar ticklish?
  Well, it's always my belief
That he giggles, as he wiggles
  Across a hairy leaf.

THE PACK RAT'S HOUSE

In oak or willow, pack rats dwell.
A willow's well,
For willows kindly spread their shade
Over a pool, where pack rats wade.

Their house is very deep and big,
Of twig on twig,
With secret door to secret hall,
Where trophies hang upon the wall.

It looks just like a robber's den.
I look again
And see my cherry curtain ring,
A piece of fringe from off my swing,

A ruby-colored crystal bead,
A cockscomb seed.
And, yes, I see they have it there—
My checker board, which everywhere

I sought and never, never found.
And all around
Are acorns, which they trade for wares
To brighten up this house of theirs.

SLY MR. WOODPECKER AND WISE MR. OWL

The fences are riddled with woodpecker holes,
And into each one a woodpecker rolls
A ripe little acorn, to stay there until
It grows a fat worm for Woodpecker's bill—
Ho, then for his fill!

Ho, then for his feast!
But Old Mr. Owl says, "I think that at least
A worm should have a slim chance for his life.
I don't think it fair and no more does my wife.

"I don't think it fair,
He always seems to have more than his share.
Some birds are careless but more debonnaire.
It's good to be wise, but this fellow is sly—
My wife likes his slyness, no better nor I."

THE PICTURE-BOOK SKY

The sky is a beautiful picture book,
With alphabet, color, and words.
Look up at the sky, when southward fly
The letters made by the birds.

The ducks and the geese and the blackbirds, all
Make A. B. C.'s in their flight.
I never wait, when the dark is late,
To read by electric light.

The clouds are trumpeting elephants
And tigers, with eyes that burn—
I lie in the crook of an oak and look,
For soon, the sky page will turn.

WHY OWLS STUFF THEIR EARS

Some owls will rest on the roofs of trees,
But studious owls will often squeeze
Into the old, abandoned hole
Of gopher, squirrel, or sightless mole,
And say, "Well, well, a quiet study!
What matter if the floor be muddy?"

For owls, who think about careers,
Will crawl down holes or stuff their ears.

THE BANISHED BUTTERCUP*

The Garden of Eden had only one flower.
What was it? The bright Buttercup.
And poor little Eve knew she couldn't leave
Without digging one of them up.

"She borrowed my sword," the stern Angel said,
"To dig up a plant, I surmise.
We'll wait by the gate, if she isn't too late."
And Adam thought that would be wise.

It wasn't so late, when she came with the sword
And a plant with its roots, dirt and all.
"I hope this one grows," she said. "I suppose
They are better if moved in the Fall."

Eve planted it there, where the Angel had stood,
And watered it well with her tears.
It spread and it grew and made flowers quite new
Through millions and millions of years.

Now that is the reason the world is in bloom
With asters and phloxes and sedges
And everywhere grows the high-hearted rose,
While pods look over the ledges.

*Many wiser people tell us, "The buttercup was the Mother Eve of all our flowers."

BIDDY HEN

A king will wear a heavy crown,
  A cow has polished horns
And wears them both, instead of one
  As did the unicorns.
The peacock drags a tiresome tail,
  While foolish Biddy mourns:

Biddy Hen, Biddy Hen, instead of laying,
  Properly dressed
You might be out playing.
Biddy Hen, Biddy Hen, in top-knots more daring
  You might be strutting now
Out for an airing.

Then she remembers her grandmother said,
"Dress up and see if you don't lose your head!"

BATS HAVE DIPPERS

Crickets begin it and up comes the moon.
And out go the bats for a flight.
With dipper for tail, how could a bat fail
To gather the gnats of the night

Into his dipper, so handy to use,
While circling and circling about?
Crickets well know where all the gnats go,
When bat after bat comes out.

Gnats will stay up as late as they can
And play for an hour at least.
Crickets begin it and up comes the moon
And out go the bats for a feast.

MRS. ROBIN'S LULLABY

Never mind the Moon Man,
With his cat-eye stars!
Once a Robin Redbreast
Slipped through music bars.

Everywhere we called him,
"Robin, Robin, Roy!"
But the Moon Man kept him,
Kept him for a toy,

Singing in a moon cage
  The one twirling tune
That Old Man had ever heard.
  Never mind the Moon,

Even though his lantern swings
  Into every nest—
You must go to sleep now,
  Quiet is the best.

A SECRET ABOUT A FROG

You wouldn't think a frog would trip,
  Miles back to where he was,
To his own pond or little drip—
  Well, he does.

It doesn't matter to a frog
  What his own home may lack.
He leaves a newer, nicer bog,
  And—goes back
More domestic than the cat,
  He sits where he has always sat.

TELL ME, GYPSY TREE

Tell me, tell me, Gypsy Tree,
Am I pretty or plain?
Shall I ever in my life wear a velvet train?
Shall I ride a golden boat up a blinking sea?
Tell me, will the Fairy Queen
Invite me in to tea?

Tell me truly, Gypsy Tree, if you are my friend—
A pool is shining at your feet, a coin for you to spend.

THE PACK RAT

The Pack Rat is a trader, O,
A trader with a pack,
And Missus Moon is stooping low
To look inside his sack.
His sack is full of silver twigs
And sticks and straw and fluff,
And lady bugs with wiggly wigs
Because the going's rough.

The Pack Rat is a trader, O,
A trader with a pack.
He takes a coin that makes a show,
And puts some twiglings back.

He takes a cheese (if ripe enough),
  And leaves a dozen sticks
Or several yards of fairy stuff,
  Then at the butter licks.

He leaves a rosy root for me,
  And takes a coral bead—
He feels that any luxury
  Is scarcely worth a weed.

ON MOON NIGHTS

On Sundays, killdees never pray
(Or else, they mumble what they say).
On shoe-black nights, no prayers are said—
The killdees get right into bed.

But when the moon's a holy candle,
The pine a candlestick and handle,
You hear them saying for "God bless me,"
Killdee, Killdee, Killdee, Killdee!

That's why they never live in trees—
So they can do just as they please,
And cuddle in the footprints round
The cattle make across the ground.

When stars are pointing in the sky,
The Killdee always shuts his eye
And saves his prayer for a flickering night
(He likes to pray by candle light).

God bless the cattle and God bless me,
Killdee, Killdee, Killdee, Killdee!

PRINCES PINE

Who was that captivated Prince
  Of old and crumbled fame?
The years have glittered since
  And faded out his name.

Bewitched by his rare Lady's power
  He named you, Princes Pine—
You humble bowed-head flower
  With blush of wine.

With laughter you were christened,
  And whisperings and dew.
A rare, rare Lady listened,
  A scented south wind blew.

The Wind will never answer me,
  The feeble Moon will wince—
Who was that rare, rare Lady?
  Who was that Prince?

THIRSTY OLD MAN SUN

Here's thirsty Old Man Sun!
Here's thirsty Old Man Sun!
A brimming spring, he'll drink and swing around
to look for more.
He drinks from Froggie's drip,
And finds the dew a sip.
Of course, he's hot, and that is what makes all
the rivers roar.

Where's thirsty Old Man Sun?
Where's thirsty Old Man Sun?
One clever cloud and then a crowd to hide the
quenching rain—
A brew of spicy taste,
Which spills in happy haste
On roaming root and thrusting shoot and finds
its sea in grain.

TOO PERSONAL

Lady Bug, Lady Bug, now you are back,
When did you garner that nice little knack
Of finding a welcome wherever you go?
Lady Bug, O,
I never meant to embarrasss you so!

Lady Bug, spiders are so seldom sought.
Yet they are cleverly, wondrously wrought,
And artists at weaving a craftier thought.
Lady Bug, O,
I never meant to embarrass you so!

Modesty seems to be something that pleases,
Or is it courtesy everything eases?
Or leaving to others their personal cheeses?
Lady Bug, O,
I never meant to embarrass you so!

Lady Bug blushingly answered, "Oh, dear,
People are flattering lady bugs here,
Where antics of ants and of bees are a show."
Lady Bug, O,
I never meant to embarrass you so!

THE DOG FOLLOWS HIS NOSE

The Leaf goes where the Wind goes,
  The River follows a trail,
But a Dog will chase his tabby foes,
  Then stop to chase a quail.

The Cat goes where the Sun goes,
  The Bird where Summer went.
But only a Dog will follow a nose,
  Which tingles to each scent.

THE MOON SILVER-POLISH SONG

I shine the tops of hippity-hops,
  Which toads and crickets make.
I polish the fish, though they say, "Pish, pish!"
  And shine up the mountain lake.

I scour the sands to witchery bands,
  And silver the sea gull's wings.
I tidy the tips of all tarnished ships,
  And rub romance over things.

THE SIERRA NEVADA RED SNOW

It snows, it snows in Vivero,
And other parts of Spain,
And yet, the Queen has never seen
Our snow of ruddy stain.

As if some wise and willful king
Imprisoned sunsets there,
The peaks will turn and start to burn
Like torches in the air.

A plant, too petty for the eye,
Spreads out this sunset glow--
A seaweed lost on mountain frost
Makes beacons of the snow.

OLD MAN WIND

Old Man Wind, with his twirling whiskers,
  Old Man Wind with his whistling shawl—
"*Who-ee*, *who-ee*, come along and follow me.
Never mind where to
  But come on when I call!"

Old Man Wind, with his jerking whistle,
  One long note and the sky will hum.
"*Who-ee*, *who-ee*, come along and follow me.
Never mind where to
  But come on, come, come, come!"

Old Man Wind, wait for I am coming,
  One long note, leaves and earth will fly.
Who-ee, *who-ee*, I follow his calliope.
Never mind where to,
  His circus passes by.

BEETLES

Beetles must use polish,
  They look so new and shiny,
Just like a freshly painted car,
  Except for being tiny.

THE OLD, OLD DOG

Old, old the Dog and old the bone,
He gnawed as he lay by the road alone.

A Robust Dog came running by,
But stopped like a clock to ask, "And why
Do you lie and gnaw at a bone like that?
It has no lean, it has no fat!"

The Old Dog said, "But it was complete
And memory is all my meat"

SECURE

No fear has Mrs. Earth of thieves,
  She leaves her treasures everywhere
  And spreads her snowflakes, carved with care,
Over the hills and fields and eaves.
Now take from her a snowflake flower,
  She gives no sign, she has no fear,
  For it returns to her a tear,
To trim a cloud or bead a shower.

No one can keep her baying winds.
  Nor spin her autumn's gossamer,
  As every strand returns to her—
She weaves a dolphin gauzy fins.

GRASS AND CRUMBS

The grass which looks so tall to ants,
Looks very short to elephants.

A crumb is great to any gnat.
"Why bother with it?" asks the Rat.

The sky, which looks so vast to me,
May be a crumb upon God's knee.

THE GOOSE GRASS LEGEND

Goose grass, the goose grass
  It never needs a stair,
Climbing up the fern fronds,
  With its feet of hair.

Watch well in moist woods
  To see the goose grass climb
Up over incense shrubs,
  One leg at a time.

Wonder at the goose grass,
For wiser people say,
"On a bed of goose straw
The Infant Jesus lay."

Robin gathers goose straw—
A pillow for his head.
Goose grass, the goose grass,
It made that Child a bed.

RHYMES FOR WIGGLE-MY-THUMBS

THREE OLD CATTLEMEN

Three Old Cattlemen
  Sleep under a tree.
Up goes a lizard,
  Down comes a bee.
Up goes a chipmunk
  And gives the tree a shake—
Three Old Cattlemen
  Are wide awake.

Three Old Cattlemen
  Run for their lives.
"Things are after us!"
  They tell their wives.
"What kind of things?"
  The wives inquire—
Three Old Cattlemen
  Snore by the fire.

SHANDYDAN

A fishing, wishing fisherman,
Known to the fish as Shandydan,
Went fishing for a golden dream
In every creek, in every stream.
He fished the oceans up and down,
And under the bridge of every town
In Norway, France, and Moorish Spain.
But, try as he would, he couldn't explain
How he caught his dream in a mizzle of rain,
How he caught a dream so long and bright
It made a day of the darkest night,
And kept out heat and kept out cold.
He hurdled a star, when he grew old,
This fishing, wishing fisherman,
Known to the fish as Shandydan.

OUR FISH-HATCHERY MAN

Timothy Tibbens, our hatchery man,
He often says, says he,
"I have been wild with the taste of salt
And the teasing of the sea."

"But now," he says, "I know what I know—
The hills for me, says I,
For fish get seasick riding a boat
And often lie down and die."

Timothy Tibbens knows well what he knows.
He trades the Javanese
A golden trout for a silver eel—
Both swung to death on the seas.

"They all get sick, out riding on boats,
And die on ocean trips.
I send out eggs and the freshest eggs
Are addled by rocking ships."

"And since," he says, "I know what I know,
And ships unsettle a trout,
I stay in the hills and let," says he,
"Them seven seas call out."

A TAILOR, A TAILOR

A tailor, a tailor, who once was a sailor,
Tattooed like a tasteful giraffe.
A man of no size, but exceedingly wise,
Who shook himself up for a laugh.

"Tape measure! tape measure!" he cried, when at leisure,
And captured a worm for just that—
A measuring worm, with an inch to the squirm,
Who measured the lean and the fat.

Encumbered with riches, he charged by the stitches
And nurtured his worm on wee grapes.
I think he was wise, for in spite of his size,
He gave up those measuring tapes.

I LOST A PRETTY PENNY

I lost a pretty penny,
And I lost a little purse.
I lost them both on Thursday
And I don't know which is worse—
To lose a pretty penny,
Or to lose a little purse.

I found a flicker's feather
And I found a hummer's nest.
I found them both on Friday
And I don't know which is best—
To find a flicker's feather,
Or to find a hummer's nest.

Hot-Water-Bottle and a Cat,
Who might have been an acrobat,
Were stirred by dreams of distant goals
And thought of far, magnetic Poles.

Hot-Water-Bottle and the Cat
  Set out to find the Pole.
Through snow and sleet and ice they went,
  Nor met a kindred soul.

The Cat said, "*This* won't do at all!
We should have brought a woollen shawl.
And naturally magnetic Poles
Forbid return for food and coals."

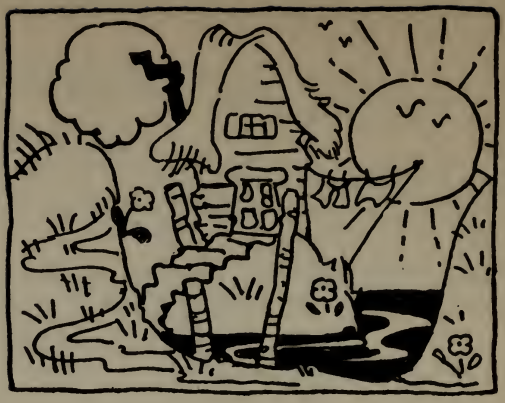
Hot-Water-Bottle kept quite still,
  Quite grim, for it was snowing.
But anyone with eyes could see
  What he was undergoing.

Bold Eskimos came on this pair,
Without a thought, without a care,
Starched out with snow beneath the Pole.
But Eskimos could not console

The Kings and Queens and Presidents—
All equally upset—
Who cried and cried, "What made them go!"—
No one has answered yet.

Hot-Water-Bottle and the Cat,
Who might have been an acrobat,
The things they had to undergo!
And now the flags are hanging low.

So tell this to all dreaming cats,
Magnetic Poles are troubling.
Hot-Bottles may be cautioned too,
If they are over-bubbling.



MISS B.
(Instead of Poor Myrtle)

There was an old lady, Poor Myrtle, Miss B.,
Who couldn't stay home if she felt fidgety.
She called on a turtle, who dwelt in a ditch,
Just dropped in to see him and wet every stitch.

She cried as she went, "I had to turn turtle!"
We'll call her Miss B., instead of Poor Myrtle.
She turned to a turtle and swam out to sea.
But instead of Poor Myrtle, we'll call her Miss B.

For why in the world should we call her Poor
Myrtle?
She might have caught cold, if she hadn't turned
turtle.

THERE ONCE WAS

There once was a hatter,
  Who never had a hat,
Because he had to purchase fish
  For his cantankerous cat.
There once was a tailor,
  Who never had a coat,
Because he had a grandmother
  Who clamored for a boat.
There once was a little boy,
  Who never had a top,
Because he spun himself around
  And found he couldn't stop.

ARGUING WITH A CAT

"A cat may look at a king,
So why should I be staying?"

"Oh, Kitty-cat, do you mean
What you are saying?"

"Well, I should have my fling——"
"But that won't get you a mouse,
Nor a bowl of lumpy cream
And the warmest seat in the house."

"A trip is best in the spring,
I should be out sight-seeing——"

"O, Kitty-cat, do you feel,
You must be fleeing?"

"Go make me a thing-me-jing,
And twist it stout and double.
I should be setting out,
While I'm young and impressionable!"

THE FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

"A four-leaf clover!" cried the Worm,
"The nicest place to sit and squirm!"

"A four-leaf clover!" croaked the Frog,
And nudged his little Pollywog.

"A four-leaf clover!" piped the Linnet,
"I'll make a nest and put this in it."

"A four-leaf clover!" said an Elf,
"Well, I can bring good luck myself;

"I know a lad who'd be a sailor,
I'll take him to an arctic whaler."

And now that lad is spearing whales,
Because he believed in fairy tales.

THE IDEAL AGE FOR A MAN

"Ten little toes, ten little toes,"
That's what the River says, as he goes.

"Eight little fingers and two little thumbs,"
That's what the Wind in the Button Bush hums.

"Two little eyes, two little eyes,"
That's what the Flicker says when he flies.

"The ideal age for a man is two,"
That's what I say, when I look at you.

A. B.
A sea chanty
C. D.
Up in this tree
E. F.
The pilot's deaf
G. H.
My old cat Patch
I. J.
The field's a bay
K. L.
A bay can swell
M. N.
All calm again
O. P.
Far sails I see
Q. R.
A mariner's star
S. T.
Just Patch and me
U. V.
Far out at sea
W. X.
The swaying decks
Y. Z.
Who's calling me?

FOUR ROYAL FAMILIES

FOUR ROYAL FAMILIES

The Queen of Clubs beats rub-a-dubs
  Upon her silver drum.
The King, be-gloved, feels pushed and shoved,
And knows he has to come.

The King of Clubs so often rubs
  Fresh varnish on his throne,
He stands about and feels put out
  Like someone at a phone.

The Jack of Clubs, who loves his tubs
  And everything delightful,
Will kick and scream for more ice cream—
  Some people think he's frightful.

The King and Queen, when they have seen
  All creatures at the zoo,
Will sit and cry and this is why—
  They've nothing else to do.

The Queen of Spades and all her maids
  Find curves within the custard.
And with their ham, instead of jam,
  They take a little mustard.

The King of Spades likes masquerades
  Much better than his milk.

He loves cockades and cavalcades
And coats of crimson silk.

The Jack of Spades will grow three blades
Of grass to feed his pony.
And then he'll say, "I fed him hay—
What makes the creature bony?"

The Queen and King will say in spring,
"The wash is getting wetter."
An autumn day, you'll hear them say,
"I like the spring much better."

The King of Diamonds always felt
A king should lunch at two,
And hoped at noon a macaroon
Would help to pull him through.

The Queen had never seen a cow
(It seemed a thousand pities)—
"Although," she said, "I've heard they're red—
One hears of things in cities."

The little Jack would take a sack
Of bread to feed the pigeons.
And while they ate, he sat in state
Receiving brave Pigwidgeons.

The King and Queen and Jack would ride
  Their elephants to chapel.
And while they sang (a merry clang)
  The elephants would napel
And dream and snore the morning through,
As elephants are apt to do.

The King of Hearts will draw some charts
  To show how bees make honey.
The bashful Bees say, "Majesties
  Can be so nicely funny."

The Queen of Hearts by fits and starts
  Goes weeding in her garden,
Where mealy bugs and countless slugs
  Stand back to beg her pardon.

The Jack of Hearts, instead of carts,
  Has airoplanes for flying,
Yet leaves the skies to make mud pies—
  His parents find him trying.

The King and Heir search everywhere
  To find their reading glasses.
And while they look in every nook,
  They find the Winter passes.

THE HOME LIFE OF MOTHER GOOSE

Little Jack Horner is wedged in the corner,
From eating so many fat plums.
Bring Little Bo-Peep with her crook and her sheep!
For I've jerked and jerked with my thumbs.

Mary, Mary, put on your shoon.
The Dish, it seems, ran away with the Spoon
For Peter Pumpkineater's pie.
Go get it, go get it!
Oh, no, not I.

Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn.
The Woman who lives in a shoe has a corn.
Go with your horn and your bleating flock,
Rouse up the Hickory, Dickory Doc.

WHEN MOTHER GOOSE LEARNED THE WORST ABOUT HUMPTY DUMPTY

I knew that he was sure to fall.
Of all strange places, on a wall!
I often said to him, "I wish
You'd learn to sit upon a dish."

OLD KING COLE WORRIED HER, TOO

Old King Cole, will you have a roll?
  And a bracing cup of tea?
Will you have some jam with a slice of ham?
  And a bite for your fiddlers three?

Your pipe and bowl, 'pon my soul,
  Will never keep you fat.
You must eat some jam with a slice of ham,
  And nourishing things like that.

OTHER TROUBLES

Dear me!
The Queen is in the kitchen
  Eating bread and honey!
She should be out parading,
  Dressed in something funny.
The Maid is in the garden
  Hanging out the clothes!
Why she hasn't that done,
  Goodness only knows.

LITTLE MISS MUFFET

Little Miss Muffet, you'll just have to rough it.
  Such a big girl, anyway!
(But why should a spider sit down beside her,
  And start her spilling the whey?)

JACK AND JILL FORGOT TO SAY "THANK YOU"

Begged a dwarf for a tale,
  Begged a bee for his pack,
Then fell over his pail—
  That's what happened to Jack!

Begged a coin from a gnome,
  Begged a duck for a quill,
Then, went rolling home—
  That's what happened to Jill!

JACK WAS NIMBLE

Jack was nimble,
And Jack was quick.
Jack jumped over a candlestick,
And burned a corner off his nose.
That's the way my whole day goes!

RHYMES FROM A MOUNTAIN RANCH

ENTERTAINING GRANDEES AND OTHER WORTHIES

The country is a lonely place
(Or so you hear them say),
"You never have a friendly face
To flicker up your day."

And yet, I polish all the spoons,
Put flowers in the hall,
For when Old Twilight rocks and croons,
The bats come in to call.

They make a circle as they wind
(The lamp's a lovely spool)
And eat the flaunting moths they find—
(But never ask for gruel).

The old blue bowl is sweetened up
With tarweed from the hill—
A gem-bossed toad goes there to sup
And drink his jesting fill.

A bashful lizard fidgets in—
To put him at his ease,
A hostess has to watch her q's
And also watch her p's.

I brush my hair, I choose my gown
  And powder up my nose—
(You cannot go unseemly down
  To greet such guests as those!)

Some nights a troop of crickets come
  (Just drop in here to fiddle),
But if the Rain will beat his drum,
  They'll sing, "Hey Diddle Diddle."

These crickets are so highly bred
  (Conventional and tame)
That when the Moon sticks in her head,
  They vanish, as they came;

They feel a caller shouldn't stay
  When other guests appear—
(Although, of course, I always say,
  "She never comes in here!")

It isn't meet to seek the great—
  (The Toad's an old Grandee!)
And yet, I never hesitate
  When Worthies come to me.

RAKING WALNUTS IN THE RAIN

Mexican Jo and Mexican Jane
Rake down walnuts in the rain,
Rake them down when the jackets split—
Walnut jackets never fit!

Walnut jackets on the ground,
Perfectly green and perfectly round,
Walnuts in their under-shells
Clang together like distant bells.

Jo wears gingham for a coat,
Jane wears silk about her throat.
Flippity flop, her red skirt goes,
Through the dripping walnut rows.

Mexican Jo and Mexican Jane
Rake down walnuts in the rain,
Water running down their backs—
Steaming rakes and picking sacks!

OUR HIRED MAN
(And His Daughter, Too)

He isn't all Indian,
He isn't all white,
But José smokes the bacon,
And milks every night.

He chases our rabbits
(When rabbits get out)
Over the mountains
And back with a shout.

From chasing tame rabbits,
He limbered up so,
He catches a cotton-tail
Just on the go!

You never saw rabbits
So woolly and so wild
As the rabbits he stews
Every night for his child,

So pink and so plumpy
(She's three and a half)
And holds both her sides
When she shakes with a laugh.

WHEN LIGHTS GO OUT

When lights go out all cats are gray.
I never thought of that, but old José,
Who splits the willows into piles
Of kindling wood, so often smiles
At Persian cats and other precious styles,
And says, "When lights are burning down,
All cats grow gray, though golden brown
Or Persian blue. When lights go out,
Only their shadows seem to move about."

CATS AND KETTLES

My Cat reminds me of a kettle
(His color, too, is buff),
He curls his tail around himself—
An edge of sooty stuff.

And when he sits upon the settle,
It might be cat, it might be kettle.

My Kettle purrs, *purr-im, purr-er*
Exactly like a cat.
And there it sits, *purr-er, purr-im,*
And there it spits, *spatt, spatt!*

"It's time to fill the Kettle now——"
And then the Kettle says, "Meow!"

Does some old witch, who can't behave
(Because she has the gout),
Throw kittens to a witching flame,
And pluck these kettles out?

I hate to interrupt your chats,
But are these kettles magic cats?

COW TIME
(And Mary Hengst)

Four o'clock, four o'clock, four o'clock—
  The cows come up to the shed.
Four o'clock, four o'clock, four o'clock—
  Black cows and white cows and red.

Our cook gets up from her rocking chair—
  The chair still placidly rocks—
"It's four, all the cows are up," she says,
  And placidly sets all the clocks.

Four o'clock, four o'clock, four o'clock—
  She always goes by the cows
Who come, she says, at the minute of four,
  Up from the fields, where they browse.

She rocks away in her rocking chair,
  Her lap a mountain of socks.
"The cows were telling the time," she says,
  "Before there were any clocks."

Whenever I go to a dinner late,
  And the hostess stiffly bows,
I always say, "We haven't your time—
  Our clocks are set by the cows."

Four o'clock, four o'clock, four o'clock—
The cows come up to the shed.
Four o'clock, four o'clock, four o'clock—
Black cows and white cows and red.

THE SALT MAN

When I eat my porridge,
  Salted to my taste,
I think about the Salt Man
The young and tired Salt Man,
  Who rides away in haste,

Riding, riding, riding
  Through rivers without bridges,
Riding with his sack of salt
  Across the chamise ridges.

When I eat a radish,
  Salted at my leisure,
  I think about the Salt Man,
The thin and laughing Salt Man,
  Who never rides for pleasure,

Riding, riding, riding,
  His horse is steaming sweat,
Riding to the waiting herds,
  Who hope he won't forget

The cattle, who are watching,
  The little, anxious deer—

"The young and tired Salt Man,
The thin and laughing Salt Man—
It's strange he isn't here!"

When I eat my popcorn,
Salted like old sails,
I think about the Salt Man,
The simple, homely Salt Man,
And not of nightingales.

WHEN COWS GET OUT

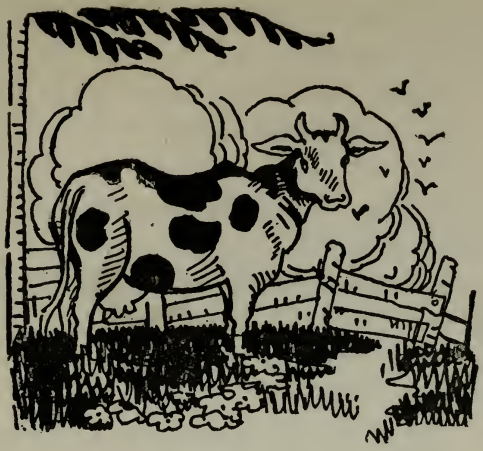
A Cow went seeking a salty patch,
  But sat her down to doubt
If patches could be made of salt—
  And if not, why was she out?

Her mournful *moo* brought out a Wind,
  A wet-footed Wind from the sea,
Who bounced him up on her dangling tongue
  And salted it carefully.

The Wind bounced up and the Wind bounced down.
  "This has no springs," said he,
"So I bounce me down and I bounce me up
  Without doing injury!"

She rolled the salt upon her tongue,
  And faith, but it tasted sweet!
And she knew there must be patches of salt
  As wide and white as a sheet.

That Cow got up adventurous,
  A-brimming full of belief,
So she sought the salt until the salt
  Went crunching under her feet.



THE RESPONSIBLE COW

What would they do in London, or even in Berlin?—
If cows should sit them down to say, "We all are getting thin,
From giving milk and giving milk. We've given what we gave."
What *would* we have for breakfast,
If cows should so behave?

What would they have for luncheon in Tartary or Rome?—
If cows should fail to fill the pails with milk for every home.

But just sat down and looked around and said,
"We're getting thin."
What *would* they have for luncheon
In London or Berlin?

What would they do in Paris, or think in wise
Madrid?—
If cows, instead of giving milk, all went away and
hid,
And said, "We've had enough of milk, we hate
the sight of foam!"
What *would* they have for dinner
In Paris or in Rome?

What would we do, what would we do, if cows
went off to mutter?
What would we do for ice cream, what would we
do for butter?
What would there be in all the world, for break-
fast, lunch, or tea?
What *would* they have for tiffin
In Rome or Tartary?

We go about
Unthinking now
How much is resting
On the Cow.

UNDER RANCH TREES

Under the oaks grow artichokes—
  Thistles sharp and gray.
Under the willows grow fairy pillows
  Of clover-scented hay.
Under the peach old witches preach
  Advice to wandering toads,
Who sit and smile for a yawning while,
  Then take to the dusty roads.

Under the oaks grow artichokes,
  At ease with spears erect.
Under the grass the beetles pass
  In the armor they affect.

THE COW'S EXCUSE

The Owl is whitened up like a clown
  To hoot the Sleepy Head.
The Sheep in wadded dressing gown
  Comes up the lane to his bed.
And cows step over the mesa's crown
  In crinkly robes of red.
The cows come twinkling drowsily down
  To comfort themselves in a shed.

The Owl is a painted, leering bird,
  Who turns the night into day,
And hoots the cross and crumpelty herd
  A-nodding over its hay.
"Hoot, hoot!" he jeers with lusty lungs,
And tired cows stick out their tongues!

RABBITS ARE LIKE ROBBER MEN

Rabbits are like robber men
  Of Oh, so long ago.
They have a hidden robber den
  From which they come and go
Hoppity loppity, hoppity loppity
  Over fields, through fences.
And sitting in a cabbage patch
  Eat up the leaves immensest.
And coming on a patch of beans,
With lacy carrots in betweens,

They sit upon
Their little haunches
And robber-like
Fill out their paunches.

Rabbits are like robber men
Of Oh, so long ago.
They have a hidden robber den
From which they come and go
Hoppity loppity, hoppity loppity
Through fences, over boulders.
And when the barley's coming ripe
Smile over rabbit shoulders.
Yes, when the corn is growing yellow,
The Rabbit is a fatter fellow.
A robber on
The road at night—
You'll see him
If the moon is bright.

IT'S GOING TO RAIN

The sun and shade are playing tag,
  The winds are running races,
The linen dances on the line,
  While cats make sad grimaces.

Distracted cats go scary-scurry
  To seek a warm and sheltered spot.
For rain is brewed in black sky kettles
  And bubbles over in the pot.

GROWN-UP BIRDS

The leaves in bright serapes
Are flitting up and down.
In red and gold serapes
They flit like folks in town,

For it's fall, fall, fall, and all the birds are tall!
And who could see the nectarines and not grow
bright at all?

The herons and the plovers
And thrasher birds all sing,
"It's strange how willy lovers
Grow nillier in spring."

For it's fall, fall, fall, and all the birds are tall!
And who could see the nectarines and not grow
bright at all?

Those birds, that just alighted,
Are flicker birds to say,
"Who could get excited
Over any day in May?"

For it's fall, fall, fall, and all the birds are tall!
And who could see the nectarines and not grow
up at all?

COUNTRY TRUCKS

Big trucks with apples
  And big trucks with grapes
Thundering through the mountains
  While every wild thing gapes.

Thundering through the valley,
  Like something just let loose,
Big trucks with oranges
  For city children's juice.

Big trucks with peaches,
  And big trucks with pears,
Frightening all the rabbits
  And giving squirrels gray hairs.

Yet, when city children
  Sit down to plum or prune,
They know more trucks are coming
  As surely as the moon.

THE PROPER WAY TO MEET MULES

The Goose is smarter than the Hen,
  The Horse knows more than the Cow,
But meeting up with a pensive Mule
  Necessitates a low bow.

The pensive Mule makes up his mind,
  In spite of his afflictions.
Salute the Mule for that! He has
  The courage of his convictions!

THE NIGHT SONG

Who is singing? Mister Moon?
  He rides alone to-night.
And might be humming some old tune
Which pleased a king and his buffoon
  And filled the henchmen with delight.
He might be singing, as he rides,
  To centaurs heeding on a hill,
For in his song you hear the tides
Or call of condor where he hides
  Under the mountain's rocky sill.
The night is swayed by careless song,
  A revelry of sound.
And who is rollicking along?
Why, Mister Moon, I can't be wrong—
There's no one else around.

PEEK INTO THE PANTRY

Peek into the pantry,
  Peek up at the cheese.
Mice will sit for supper,
  Napkins on their knees.

Knees all soft and silky,
  Cheese upon their laps.
Cats will cuddle cozily,
  Taking their cat naps.

GARDEN GUESTS

My shyer friends, my gayer guests—
House finches in their gaudy vests.
A long white string to mark their nests,
Lest, absent-minded, they should fly
Into a nest where robins lie.
And have some bee roll up his eyes
In pained and practical surprise.
What is a garden without these?
The tree toads squat on graying trees,
In crumpled clothes with baggy knees.

My shyer guests, my gayer friends,
The gopher snake that makes amends
(Surprising gophers in their dens)
For some old gossip told to Eve,
Which made a race of gardeners grieve.

TALKING ABOUT GOLDFISH FOR PRESENTS

Those goldfish out in the leaf-lit pool
  Are hiding under a rock,
And living in a bowl again
  Might give them a nasty shock!

So give away roses, I won't care—
  Give tulips flecked with foam.
You can't give goldfish back to a bowl,
  When once they have had a home!

TOM, TOM, THE RANCHER'S SON

He never found a four-leaf clover,
  He never was an only child,
And hoped to be a rakish rover,
Sailing far from fields of stover.
His hair has always been unruly.
  He never lived on circus streets,
And watched parades, while sitting, coolly,
Underneath an arbor wholely.

His nose will blister in the sun.
  He never found a four-leaf clover,
  And yet, he searches fields all over,
So sure he is of finding one.

CALIFORNIA COFFEE BUSHES

Blessed be the Coffee Bushes!
  A feast for famished birds,
Of berries red and luscious,
  Or black as bitter words.
And berries green as grasses,
  All dangling from one bough,
To feed the feathered masses
  Which live just anyhow.
Blessed be the Coffee Berries,
As motley as wee fairies.

RANCH ROBBERS

Raccoons ate the berries.
  Coyotes took the geese.
Weasels stole the turkeys—
  I wept at their *démise*.
Flickers swept the plum trees,
  Leaving the barest of boughs.
Yet, there came no robber
  To gobble up the cows.

Whereat the cows stole all our pears,
And gave themselves the strangest airs.

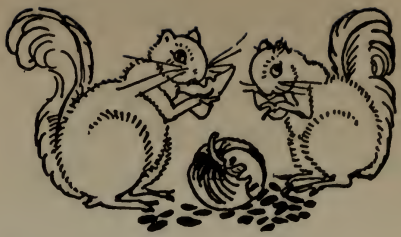
SINGING BEGGARS

Beggars, Beggars, Beggars,
  Broken, ragged, and cold.
Crowding, they cry around me,
  Overly bold.

Shake off your coats of hoar frost,
  Wipe the wet from your feet!
Bread for you, Little Beggars,
  And barley to eat.

Beggars, Beggars, Beggars,
  Sparrow, peewee, and quail,
Caroled me a Christmas carol,
  Told me a tale.

Song for you, Clumsy Sister,
  Take your Christmas dole!
Beggars, the Singing Beggars,
  With crumbs for your soul.



THE APPLE-SEED PARTY

The squirrels have made a path into the orchard,
Tramping down the sage and weeds
Coming in for apple seeds—
A weeny path, but very white and hard.

The squirrels are sitting up around a tree,
Holding apples in their paws,
Crack 'em open with their claws
And eat the apple seeds quite tidily.

Some Tuesday when I'm feeling brisk and hearty,
Apple seeds, I'll pile and pile
High enough to reach a mile,
And tell the squirrels I'm giving them a party.

The squirrels will come from woods of rusty
reeds,
Then when all of them are in,
Such a munching will begin—
Crunching, munching, munching apple seeds.

OLD GOODIE DANCED HERSELF

It's good to see the wild doves
  Come in to glean the grain;
A feathery cloud of gray blue
  On barley fields again.
The wild blue doves go drifting—
  In trees anointed gold
A cloud of doves hangs singing,
  And Earth forgets she is old.

Old Goodie Earth goes dancing,
  The leaves fly under her toes.
She saw a cloud a-singing
  And danced herself Goodness knows!
The ground is red with apples,
  Where dizzily she lies.
And seeds are scattered everywhere,
  While Goodie laughs and cries.

SHOPPING FOR TAIL FEATHERS

That's Mrs. Muldoon's old freckled hen,
Kicking and breaking her eggs again.

"What is the matter?" asks Mrs. Muldoon.
"She used to set as still as a spoon.

"I can think back to the very day when
She used to be a most sensible hen."

Down by the river just yesterday,
I saw a dwarf with a feather of gray,

A tail feather too, perched over his ear—
That's Mrs. Muldoon's old hen you hear,

Flapping around and kicking her eggs,
Hitting a dwarf with her bushy legs.

JUNE
(The Sierra Dry Season Begins)

Little green apples and little green pears.
Frivolous finches with family cares,
Tenors and bassos with no time for trills,
Searching out worms for wide-open bills.
Lambs have grown up to their long dangling tails,
Calves no longer suck milk out of pails.
Everything waxes like sunlight at noon.
What has become of the mischievous Moon?
(That is the Dish running off with the Spoon.)
Who could have dreamed this would happen in June?—
Grass-toppling hills turned by Midas to gold.
Oak trees repeating the talk of the old
Judas Witch down where the river rebels.
Nuts have gone again into their shells!
Only the pomegranate blooms by the wall—
Oh, for the light-footed patter of fall!

HARVEST TRAMPS

Gipsies in the orchard nook,
  Gipsies on the hill,
Gipsies coming back again
  Now the nights are chill.

All along the river's edge
  Here and there a fire.
Gipsies are but harvest tramps,
  When they work for hire.

Harvest tramps will gather grapes,
  Make persimmon bins—
Sleepy Summer stirs to hear
  Gipsy violins.

TO ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

My wild, free flying bird is dead—
My bird that called me from my bed
  To open wide the screen.
And gave an answer when I spoke
And cooed and hovered for my stroke.
  St. Francis, have you seen
An ordinary mountain dove
Appearing lonely there above?
  You'll notice one so tame,
A calling song and there he comes—
He should have gravel with his crumbs.
  Sky Pilgrim is his name.

CIDER TIME

Cider bubbles into a barrel—
  Oh, but the fairies know!
Round and round the cider press
  Red-cheeked fairies go,
Skipping on the apple skins.
  While the cider roars,
Round and round the fairies spin,
  Licking apple cores.

NIGHT PRAYERS

I thank the ducks and geese for pillows,
  And thank the sheep for coverings
Of wool to cuddle snugly under
  And dream of flocks with shepherd kings.

God bless the herds and flocks and feathered.
  And bless the Moon, she's all alone.
And yet it's hard, instead of resting,
  You must be listening from a throne.

MOTHS

My lamp is but a little lamp,
  And yet, the moths it brings
With scarlet dress and sprightliness
  And twilight on their wings.

My lamp is but a little lamp—
  Its beams no distance run.
But, oh, it tells of wondrous moths,
  Bright captives to the Sun.

I know the rarest moths must flit
  About a world of fire,
As large and beautiful as birds
  In jungles of desire.

My road is but a mountain road—
  Its lamps are few and far.
And yet, who knows, but someone goes
  From star to waiting star.

THE FAIRIES ARE BACK

Moss, moss and mushrooms,
  Bring the fairies back!
The bashful ones in breeches,
  Whose voices creak and crack.
The ones who look like witches
  And fly away on crows.
All, all as small as stitches,
  With something of a nose.

SIR WILLIAM WRINKLE NOSE

The fairy who can find your sock
And knows right where you lost your block
Is Old Sir William Wrinkle Nose,
Who sees where every lost thing goes.

He sits behind an Alder Tree,
Which whispers, whispers endlessly,
"Where can it be, where can it be?"

He holds a mirror to his ear,
That's how Sir Wrinkle Nose can hear
Just where your bright new penny rolled—
Sir William Wrinkle Nose, the Old,

Who sits behind an Alder Tree,
Which whispers, whispers endlessly,
"Where can it be, where can it be?"

He knows the spot where Captain Kidd
Has gold and silver ingots hid
And pokes about, a skinny ghost.
Sir Wrinkle Nose will search the coast

But only hear the pirate weep,
While creeping things begin to creep
And snoring things drop off to sleep.

The fairy who can find a kite,
When it has blown far out of sight,
Is Old Sir William Wrinkle Nose,
Who sees where every lost thing goes.

He sits behind an Alder Tree,
Which whispers, whispers endlessly,
"Where can it be, where can it be?"

PUCK AND THE AIRMAN

Up in the sky goes the Airman,
Scattering the bees and the birds,
Sending the clouds a-scamper,
Changing the smoke into curds.

Up in the sky goes the Airman.
Puck begs a pretty boon:
"Ho," he calls to the Airman,
"Bring me a bit of the moon!"

"Bring me a sliver of silver,
Thin, if you please, as my thumb.
Then when I sit and rub it,
What but Romance will come?

"Stones will be heaps of ivory,
Mountains will burst into bloom,
Aprons will turn into satin,
Glamour will ride on the broom.

"Age will be leaves in the autumn,
Words will be crickets in June,
Ho," he calls to the Airman,
"Bring me a bit of the moon!"

THE FATTER FAIRIES

Little Green-eyed Monsters
  Have no alfy balfy bet,
Yet, they have their studies
  And their spelling words to get.

Little Green-eyed Monsters
  Have no henny penny scrawl,
Yet, they spell their wordies,
  And sque wee double wall, spells squall.

"Sque wee double wall, spells squall!"
  You hear them sing and shout it,
"We have no alfy balfy bet,
  And no two ways about it."

Little Green-eyed Monsters
Have no rithy, mithy tick.
Yet, they count their marbles
With an eenie meenie stick.

"Eenie, meenie, minie, mo
Is all we have for numbers!
We are the fatter fairies, so
Our learning unencumbers."

Little Green-eyed Monsters
Never let their brows grow tall.
But cheery, peery as the birds,
They never know it all.

"We never know it all!
Our learning unencumbers.
Sque wee double wall, spells squall!
We haven't any numbers!"

And you
can't help
liking them.

BEGGING THE ANSWER

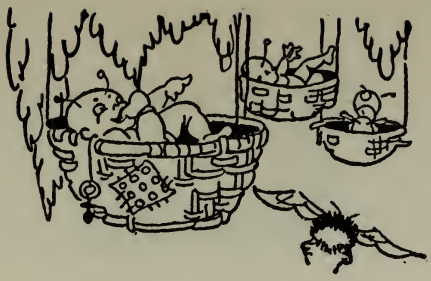
Why does the Screech Owl screech?
Go over the hill and across the flat. . . .
You'll find a houseboat on the ditch.
And teetering with a water rat,
A muddy-eyed old witch.
Ask her why does the Screech Owl screech,
Until your marrows chill?
But stay back out of her skinny reach—
Run over the flat to the hill!

Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!
Come back before I go to bed,
And tell me what that old witch said.

HOW TO TELL GOBLINS FROM ELVES

The Goblin has a wider mouth
  Than any wondering elf.
The saddest part of this is that
  He brings it on himself.
For hanging in a willow clump
  In baskets made of sheaves,
You may see the baby goblins
  Under coverlets of leaves.

They suck a pink and podgy foot,
  (As human babies do),
And then they suck the other one,
  Until they're sucking two.
And so it is that goblins' mouths
  Keep growing very round.
So you can't mistake a goblin,
  When a goblin you have found.



COULD IT HAVE BEEN A SHADOW?

What ran under the rosebush?
  What ran under the stone?
Could it have been a shadow,
  Running away alone?
Maybe a fairy's shadow,
  Slipping away at dawn
To guard a gleaming pot of gold
  For a busy leprechaun.

THE MICE HERDER

Over the mesa and down a-hustle,
  The Shee is herding her mice.
  The Shee is herding her mice
To skimp and scamper about and rustle
  In the fields of drying rice.

Over the desert and through the chia,
  The Shee is taking her herds.
  The Shee is taking her herds
Of mice to swim the Kaweah,
  To the tittle-tattle of birds.

Into the cotton fields, she wheedles
  Her herds of mice with a horn.
  For mice will follow a horn.
Her eyes are deep and bright as needles,
  Her nose, as thin as a thorn!

Out of the way of the twirling Twilight,
  She beds her mouslings warm.
  She beds her mouslings warm
Under the prying eyes of Night,
  By willows, out of the storm.

THE ENCHANTED PULLMAN PORTER

She rode right in on the engine smoke
  Without the slightest trouble,
Because she was a wispy witch
  And all her joints were double.
She wore a cloak of seeds and fluff,
  She ate an elderberry.
The Porter's eyes grew round as rings—
  "Excuse me, Mrs. Fairy!"

He caught her in a pillow slip
And held the ends together.
Then, tossing it over the window sill,
He shook her out like a feather.
Her shriek was thin and sweet and shrill,
But she said her witchings wordy,
And from that day to this one now,
That Porter's been a birdie.

He teeters on a swaying leaf
And coos the sauciest coo—
"I have to whisk YOU," over again
And over, "I have to whisk YOU!"
You never catch his family name
For listening to his longings.

(Those whisk brooms hanging on the hill
Are surely his belongings.)*

*The wildflower, Escobita (little whisk broom).

EVERYTHING IS A FAIRY TALE

Bananas are berries,
  So think what you please.
That's stranger than fairies
  Out riding on bees.
If spiders were insects
  Would witches say, "Why,
Some people resent us
  Up mopping the sky"?

My lizard, regretting,
  Slips out of her skin—
A happy forgetting
  Of button and pin.
And how she gets out,
  Nobody discloses.
I've faith in fairies
  Because I see roses.

THE QUEEN'S STOCKINGS

Water in ruts is *tut-tutting tut-tuts*,
Willows untidy were gossiping Friday,
Gossiping Friday:

"Why, this is shocking, look at her stocking!
Look at the hole, but don't tell a soul,
Don't tell a soul!"

"Fairy and Queen, just where have you been?"
"Out in the cockleburrs, getting my pony spurs."
"Out in the cockleburrs?"

"Stockings a spider spun—look at the other one,
My, what a dreadful run!"

Water in ruts is *tut-tutting tut-tuts*,
Willows untidy were gossiping Friday.

WHILE HOEING

When a fairy stops and chatters
She brings up the strangest matters,
Such as lunacy in hatters,
And why ducks must always waddle,
And a finch must twitter twaddle.

And she hopes Old Emperor Frost
Finds the flashing jewels he lost.
"But," she asks, "should pigs keep squealing?
For," she says, "I can't help feeling
Quietness is more appealing.

"Why should hens set up a chorus
When they lay an egg before us?
Are we blind, that they should bore us?"
Then she says, "I see you're hoeing.
Anyway, I should be going. . . ."

COAXING A FAIRY FIDDLER

Fiddle me away, Little Man,
With fairy fiddle and bow.
My heart will follow fairies
But my feet will go
To gather the walnuts in
And find the fallen pears—
Put tunes to my heels, Little Man,
Adventurous airs!

Now pull on your toad-lily hat
With button-like burr atop.
And fasten your jacket tight
Lest winds give a hop.
Come dance me over your hill,
Exciting the brush and briar.
We'll pass the Moon on her way
And come to your fire.

Hippity hop and away—
O Fairy Fiddler, play!

NOT FOR PERFECT CHILDREN

THE PERFECT CHILD

Once there was a little boy,
  Who never found a dog,
He never had a freckle
  And he never touched a frog.
He always kept his hands clean
  And free from spreading warts.
And always had a handkerchief
  But no indignant snorts.

Now once when he went walking,
He met SIX CHESHIRE CATS,
And all of them were comely,
And all wore country hats.
And when they saw this little boy,
They smiled until they cried,
Because they thought him funny—
The child lay down and died.

THINGS SAID TO ONE'S SELF

In case of tigers in the house,
  Or bears upon the stairs,
Or lions in the orchard,
  With long and bristling hairs,
It's just as well to be in bed
And know one's prayers were nicely said.

ARISTOCRATS

A King of course is a King,
And a Prince has stockings of money.
But a Bird has a tree for a swing,
And a Bee has a hobby for honey.

A Lizard can take off his tail
And put it back on, if he sneezes.
A Saurian turns very pale,
Or purple and pink, when he pleases.

A Worm can tailor a wing
And fly up over the ocean—
But a King is only a King,
And a Prince is only a notion.

MRS. J. B. CONNING PURR

Mrs. J. B. Conning Purr,
  She thought it only right,
When calling up her Baker Man,
  To dress in starchy white.
She never read of jungles
  While rocking in a chair,
But only seated at the zoo
  With Attas in her hair.
It somehow seemed impossible
  To eat an oyster stew,
Unless she saw the ocean
  Grow bright as ormolu.
Her children often pleaded,
  "Do try a glass of milk!"
How could she drink such simple stuff,
  While dressed like that in silk?
She couldn't say her evening prayers
  Just kneeling by her bed,
But had to have a steeple
  Tied high above her head.
For getting up to burglars,
  She kept a mask and kit.
And once when she felt pitiful,
  She swallowed quite a pit.
And that was what became of her—
This Mrs. J. B. Conning Purr.

FOR BORED BOBBY

To think that ants are keeping pets
Down in their homes! While Bobby frets,
A soldier ant climbs parapets.

To know that ants are taking straws
And bedding cows will often cause
A hurried President to pause

And smile. For cows are kept by ants—
The wee, wee cows, who eat wee plants,
And give a drop of milk to ants.

To think that certain children say,
"What shall I do, do, do to-day?"
When ants are living out their way.

The whole outdoors is full of toys
For searching girls and searching boys,
Who find the things an elf enjoys.

UNCLE FRANK

It's queer about my Uncle Frank,
He sits and figures in a bank,
When he might keep a candy store—
A shining sign above the door.
Or he might keep a big toy shop
With things that fly and skip and hop—
With trailer trucks and things that crank,
Instead of working in a bank.

DEAF TO APPLAUSE

I thank the Silkworm for her silk,
And thank the Cow for all this milk.

I thank the Bear, for being funny,
And thank the Bee for making honey.

I thank the Robin for his rhymes,
And thank the Lime Tree for these limes.

A foolish thing to do, because
They never listen to applause.

ANCESTORS

A diplomatic dog,
  Or a cold and courtly cat,
Or a pompous little frog,
  May have ancestors, at that!

A Dog once followed Three Men,
  Who rode on after a star,
And certain dogs since then
  Must consider who they are.

A Frog hushed Moses to sleep,
  When he lay in rusty rushes,
So descendants of that Frog
  Still speak to you in hushes.

And who could hurry a Cat
  Whose ancestor purred for a Queen?
Or chased King Arthur's Rat?
  Or moused a bowling green?

WHEN KINGS ARE PUNCHING CATTLE

When kings are punching cattle,
  And cowboys sit on thrones,
And cats shave off their whiskers,
  And dogs go selling bones,
Then I shall always be on time
  And never lose a thing,
And be so busy doing that,
  I'll have no time to sing.
No time to greet God's little moon
Or coax a cricket in
To warm his legs before my fire
And chirp about some small desire.

WHEN BEES STAY HOME

On rainy days
  The bees stay home,
And comb their eyes
  With a wee eye-comb.
And to remove
  All golden specks,
They scrub and scrub
  And scrub their necks.
They never say,
  "Ho hum, ho hum,"
And wait for com-
  Pany to come.
They never ask
  For bread or cheese,
But brush and brush
  And brush their knees.

It would be hard
  To live with such,
Who scrub and scour
  So overmuch.
And never have
  Enough of ease
To sniff a wet
  And rosy breeze.

These bees complain
  If it's not fair—
Yet sniffing frogs
  Are debonair.
For theirs is not
  The temperament
To live in hives
  And be content.

DON'T HURT YOUR OWN FEELINGS

Never feel lordly and grand,
  Never feel low and mean—
Sillier colds-in-the-head
  May stay and fret a queen.

Never feel grand or mean,
  When Shakespeare shivered away,
Holding a gipsy's horse
  While he went in to the play.

I KNOW THE RABBIT

I know the Rabbit by his ears,
The Mouse by all her scampering fears.

I know a Child by artlessness,
And by the wonder he can sense.

And Men and Women not by chat,
But by the things they're laughing at.

RIDING TO LADY BUG MESA

This is the way to Lady Bug Land,
Lady Bug Land,
Where bushes are covered with Lady Bugs and
They seem to be covered with berries.

This is the place where Lady Bugs go,
Lady Bugs go,
When hills higher up are covered with snow
And goblins come down to the dairies.

This is where Lady Bugs ride on a cow,
Lady Bugs bow.
Lady Bugs, Lady Bugs, quail whistle now,
"How we wish you were cherries!"

SLEEP, LITTLE BOY

Sleep, Little Boy, the twilight brings
On tip-toe softest coverings.

The moon is but the silver horn,
A princess blows for her unicorn.

The stars, like knights, how dim their mail
Beside the glow of the Holy Grail—

A brimming cup of golden light,
Concealed from us on the brink of night,

And lifted high again in the sky
Another day to glorify.

BRADLEY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
BOUND
JUN 3 1936
CHICAGO, ILL.